

Michigan Merit Exam Persuasive Writing Scoring Guide
Task II: Taking a Stand

Characteristics	Position	Complexity	Organization	Language
6	The essay takes a position on the issue in the prompt, shows clear understanding of that issue, and maintains focus across the response. The position is supported thoroughly and consistently with specific, logical reasons and/or examples.	The response may demonstrate insight and complexity by evaluating various implications of the position and/or by responding to arguments that differ from the writer's position.	Organization is well controlled, with a logical sequence of reasons and strong transitions and relationships among reasons.	The essay shows a good command of varied, precise language that supports meaning. Few, if any, errors distract the reader.
5	The essay takes a position on the issue in the prompt, shows clear understanding of that issue, and maintains focus through most of the response. The position is supported with specific logical reasons.	The essay may show recognition of complexity by partially evaluating implications of the issue, or by responding to arguments that differ from the author's position.	Organization is generally controlled, with occasional lapses in sequencing and/or relationships among reasons.	Language is competent and supports meaning. Errors are rarely distracting.
4	The essay takes a position on the issue in the prompt, shows an understanding of that issue, and is generally focused. The position is supported adequately, and may be an uneven mixture of general and specific reasons.	The essay may show some recognition of complexity by responding to some arguments that differ from the writer's position.	Some organization is evident in the sequencing and relationships of reasons.	Language is adequate. Errors may distract, but do not interfere with meaning.
3	The essay takes a position on the issue in the prompt, shows some understanding of the issue in the prompt, but may not remain focused. The position is supported with reasons that may be limited and/or repetitious.	The essay may also mention an argument that opposes the writer's position.	Organization may be uneven, but there are clusters of sequenced and related reasons.	Language may be limited. Errors may occasionally interfere with meaning.
2	The essay takes a position, but shows little understanding of the issue in the prompt, or takes an unclear position. Support may be so minimal or unclear that organization may not be apparent.		Organization may not be apparent.	Language may be simple. Errors may interfere with meaning.
1	The essay takes no position, or takes a position with no support, showing little or no understanding of the issue in the prompt.		There is little or no evidence of an organizational structure, or of sequencing and connecting reasons.	Language may be limited and contain errors that detract from meaning.
0	The essay (A) is off topic, (B) was written in a language other than English or illegible, or (C) was not found in your answer folder.			